



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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Chairman

Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member

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July 25, 2023

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

I write to request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a detailed review of the U.S. Coast Guard's administration of its Sexual Assault Prevention, Response, and Recovery (SAPRR) Program. The SAPRR program's mission is clear: "eliminate sexual assault within the Coast Guard and provide response services when a sexual assault does occur."

SAPRR is an integrated program that extends across all Coast Guard service members and associated civilians, reservists, auxiliaries, and dependents. The Coast Guard seeks to eliminate sexual assault by providing a culture of prevention, education and training, response capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and accountability to enhance the safety and well-being of all members. Coast Guard policies regarding sexual assault prevention, response, and recovery provide specific guidance to victim advocates (VAs), sexual assault response coordinators (SARCs), commanding officers (COs), and officers-in-charge (OICs) regarding their roles to prevent and respond to sexual assaults. If successful, the SAPRR program should reduce the stigma of reporting; protect victims; increase prevention, investigation, prosecution, and victim care capabilities; increase training and resources; and refine and sustain 24/7 response capacity throughout the Coast Guard.

Unfortunately, recent high-profile incidents call into question whether SAPRR is achieving its objectives, let alone preventing sexual harassment and assault. Media reports indicate that the Coast Guard has seriously mishandled sexual assault allegations, including hiding from Congress an investigation into dozens of allegations from 2014 to 2020. As of May 2023, the Coast Guard has deployed additional resources in this area, including changes to its reporting policy and the launch of a special prosecutor to address the most complex, sensitive sexual assault cases. Based on these concerns and the Coast Guard's renewed focus on addressing sexual assault and

harassment, we ask that GAO conduct a review of Coast Guard programs to address sexual assault and harassment, including SAPRR program's effectiveness.

We request GAO examine:

- (1) The Coast Guard's policies, programs, and trainings to prevent, respond to, and resolve incidents of sexual harassment and assault, and resources including costs and personnel.
- (2) The utilization rate of sexual assault services by active duty and civilian personnel.
- (3) The mechanisms in place to oversee the SAPRR program and determine its effectiveness.
- (4) The key challenges Coast Guard VAs, SARCs, COs, OICS, and others have faced in integrating SAPRR into the Service.
- (5) The extent to which the Coast Guard has policies and procedures to monitor (i.e., track, respond to, and resolve) sexual harassment and assault incidents, investigations, and prosecutions and what trends such information indicates for the most recent 10-year period.
- (6) The Coast Guard's policies surrounding the notification of Congress on open, closed, and ongoing investigations.
- (7) A comprehensive review of processes, procedures, recommendations and resulting policy changes relating to Operation Fouled Anchor.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this request, please contact Matt Dwyer, Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Democratic Staff Director, at (202) 225-4472 or [matt.dwyer@mail.house.gov](mailto:matt.dwyer@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member



Salud Carbajal  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation



Hilary J. Scholten  
Vice Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation